

Appl. No. 10/602,567
Amdt. dated Nov. 19, 2004
Reply to Office Action of September 9, 2004

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (previously amended) A bottom-supported offshore structure, comprising:

a buoyant hull having a bottom portion;

a plurality of legs engaged with the hull for supporting the hull when the hull is in an operational condition; and

a mat secured to lower portions of the legs, said mat having sufficient buoyancy to facilitate floating of the hull when the structure is in transit, while facilitating lowering of the mat to a seabed without assistance of a ballasting means, said mat having a central opening, the bottom portion of the hull nesting within the central opening when the structure is in a non-operational position.

Claim 2 (previously amended) The structure of Claim 1, wherein said mat comprises a plurality of hollow mat-forming members, said hollow members defining the central opening in the mat.

Claim 3 (original) The structure of Claim 2, wherein said mat has a pre-determined surface footprint, and wherein said central opening occupies a substantial portion of said surface footprint.

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Claim 4 (previously amended) The structure of Claim 1, wherein said bottom portion of the hull is sized and shaped to extend into the central opening formed in the mat such that a bottom surface of the hull bottom portion extends in a substantially co-planar relationship to a bottom surface of the mat.

Claim 5 (original) The structure of Claim 1, wherein said mat has a surface footprint sufficient to ensure stability of the structure when the mat is embedded into the seabed.

Claim 6 (currently amended) A method of positioning an offshore structure in a selected location for conducting exploratory operations, comprising the steps of:

providing a buoyant hull, a plurality of legs engaged with the hull for supporting the hull when the hull is in an operational condition, and a mat secured to lower portions of the legs, said mat having a central opening for receiving a bottom portion of the hull when the offshore structure is in transit such that a bottom surface of the hull bottom portion extends in a substantially co-planar relationship to a bottom surface of the mat;

lowering the legs and the mat toward a bottom of a body of water without assistance of a ballasting means with the legs and the mat being configured to facilitate lowering of the mat to the bottom of the body of water; and

causing said mat to engage the bottom of the body of water, thereby supporting the structure in the selected location.

Claim 7 (original) The method of Claim 6, wherein said mat has a pre-determined footprint and wherein said central opening occupies a substantial portion of said footprint.

Claim 8 (original) The method of Claim 6, wherein said mat has a surface footprint sufficient to ensure stability of the structure when the mat is embedded into the seabed.

Claim 9 (original) The method of Claim 6, wherein said mat comprises a plurality of hollow mat-forming members, said hollow members defining the central opening in the mat.

Claim 10 (original) The method of Claim 6, wherein said mat provides sufficient buoyancy to facilitate floating of the offshore structure in shallow waters.

Claim 11 (previously added) A bottom-supported offshore structure, comprising:

- a buoyant hull having a bottom portion;

- a plurality of legs engaged with the hull for supporting the hull when the hull is in an operational condition; and

- a mat secured to lower portions of the legs, said mat having a central opening and sufficient buoyancy to facilitate floating of the hull when the structure is in transit, while facilitating lowering of the mat to a seabed without assistance of a ballasting means, said bottom portion of the hull being configured to entirely nest within the central opening when the structure is in transit.

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Claim 12 (previously added) The structure of Claim 12, wherein said mat has a surface footprint sufficient to ensure stability of the structure when the mat is embedded into the seabed.